



# Redwood Empire Chapter Newsletter -- July, 2013

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## MULBERRY AND STONE FRUIT TASTING AT WOLFSKILL

The Agricultural Research Station at Wolfskill Ranch held its annual mulberry and stone fruit tasting on the morning of Saturday, June 22.

Mulberry season was nearing its end, but there were still a half dozen varieties in bowls for tasting. Unless you live with a mulberry tree, they're a rare treat, because they don't keep long enough to market commercially. In Asia they're sometimes dried to preserve them. Last year the Wolfskill staff dried about eight varieties from their collection and held a blind tasting of dried mulberries. As with figs, some types made much better dried berries than others.

This year, staff scientist Jenny Smith tried adding mulberries to a cake recipe. They baked up well, holding their shape and flavor. (I have also seen dried white mulberries incorporated, along with other fruit and nuts, into a premium chocolate bar made by Michael Recchiuti, called Orchard; the dried mulberries pair wonderfully with good dark chocolate.)

This year, though, the stone fruits were the stars of the show. There were about fifteen early varieties of peaches, apricots, plums, and pluots on tables for tasting – more than I could catalog. Fruit varieties were featured from all over the world: plums from Hungary, Pakistan, France, Russia, and New Zealand, and peaches from Italy and China, in addition to a Galaxy peach, developed here in the United States, a native plum from the midwest, a Luther Burbank hybrid called "Mammoth Cardinal," and an experimental hybrid from U.C. Davis. The Miramudit plum, grown from seeds from a plum found in a market in Pakistan, was one of the hits of the tasting, a bite-sized gold and blush plum with a lot of sweetness and flavor. I'm sure several of us saved pits from it to try to grow at home.

The morning ended with a van tour of the orchard, after which we were allowed to walk through the mulberry and plum sections and sample fruit from the trees.

## BARK GRAFTING CLINIC

On May 5, the chapter held its annual bark grafting clinic at David Ulmer's house in Sebastopol. David gave a talk on when and how to bark graft and demonstrated some techniques, including the showy "banana graft," which must be seen to be appreciated.

David's talk included advice on preparing for bark grafting, as well as the technique itself.

For a bark graft you need a dormant scion or a mature bud and a good growing rootstock or branch with slipping bark, i.e., bark that peels off easily from the stem. For a dormant scion you'll need one that was cut during its winter dormant period and kept refrigerated, since the bark on most fruit trees begins slipping around May, at a point when fruit trees are well into flowering and leafing out.

Bark grafting needs a thicker rootstock branch than cleft or whip grafting; preferably at least 3/4 inch in diameter.

About two weeks before you graft, fertilize the rootstock tree and water it well, to encourage growth.

Picking your scion wood: When topworking a tree, use a scion with about 6 buds, if possible, to get faster production of fruit. When taking buds from citrus for grafting, look for round stock, to make budding easier. You will want to wrap the entire scion on parafilm; a good time to do this is before you do the graft. (More)

### **NEWSLETTER EDITOR NEEDED:**

The Redwood Empire chapter needs a new newsletter editor. Linda Robertson and Michael Kurland, our present editor and layabout, will be moving out of the area in the fall of this year.

The newsletter is published quarterly, posted on the chapter web site, and distributed to the chapter listserv and, on request, by snail mail. In addition, the newsletter editor sends a monthly e-mail blast to all chapter members announcing upcoming chapter events.

If you'd like to volunteer, please contact chapter president Maile Pieri at [cafarmgal@yahoo.com](mailto:cafarmgal@yahoo.com).

(Bark Grafting Continued)

For the actual graft, at the bottom end of the scion make a wedge as in cleft grafting, but instead of making cut the same length on both sides, make a long cut on one edge and a short one on the other. Cut the end of the stock to where you want the graft to be. Make two parallel slices down the stock from the end, as far apart as the width of the scion and about as long as the long cut. Peel the strip of bark between the slices down to the length of the long cut, exposing the cambium layer, without completely removing the bark from the branch. Then place the long cut surface of the scion against the exposed surface of the stock, to get cambium contact, and cover it with the peeled-back bark. To retain moisture, wrap the graft really well. David starts by wrapping with plastic tape for a tight graft and the follows with parafilm or masking tape. Cover everything, and if you haven't previously wrapped the entire scion in parafilm, do that now.

Bark grafts, because they're made so near the edge of the stock, are weaker than cleft grafts and often need splinting for support and wind protection as they develop.

Banana grafts: A banana graft is a bark graft made by peeling back all the bark from the end of the stock. Use stock and scion wood of close to the same size. Make four parallel vertical slices about 1 1/4 inches long through the bark of the stock at even intervals, starting at the end of the stock, and peel the bark back in four strips, like peeling a banana. Using pruners, cut the stripped piece of the stock out of the middle, leaving the peeled back bark. For the scion, instead of a single wedge cut, make four shallow cuts about an inch long around its sides, leaving a little bark between them, so that you have a more or less square end consisting of sides of exposed wood with strips of bark between them. Set the scion end-to-end with the stock, pull up the four pieces of bark to cover the scion and get cambium contact, and wrap everything really well.

Banana grafts are good for trees that are difficult to graft successfully, such as walnuts. You can watch a video of banana grafting a pecan tree at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC7ZasquCK4>

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#### TOUR OF KEITH BORGLUM'S ORCHARD

On April 21, about thirty-five of us gathered for a tour of Keith Borglum's orchard and garden on Piner Road in Santa Rosa. Keith grows an amazing variety of fruit trees – apples, pears, peaches, plums, cherries, figs, grapes, quinces, mulberries, and some exotics such as jujubes and Japanese raisins. He also has a grape arbor, 6-8 varieties of raspberries, numerous citrus trees, and hives of bees. A twenty-year-old row of Asian pears is espaliered along a fence at the border of his property.

The focus of the tour was the hoop house greenhouse Keith built for under \$500, starting with plans available on-line. For his house, he made a number of upgrades to the basic plans. As he showed us through the hoop house, he gave tips about materials and building >

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **RECRG Annual Plant Sale:**

July 13 (Saturday), 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Santa Rosa Original Certified Farmer's Market, outside the Wells Fargo Center, 50 Mark West Springs Road, Santa Rosa. We'll have 80+ grafted fruit trees for sale, mostly apples, but also some pears, cherries, subtropicals, etc.

Volunteers are needed to help set up at 7 a.m., or at 8 or later to help sell plants. Plants donated for sale are also welcome, both fruit-bearing varieties and ornamentals. If you have a plant or plants you'd like to donate, contact Keith Borglum at [keith@borglum.com](mailto:keith@borglum.com), to make arrangements, or bring them to our table on the morning of the sale.

### **Citrus budwood pickup and grafting clinic:**

July 14 (Sunday), 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. For the second year, chapter member Dick Kirk has ordered citrus budwood and rootstocks for us from the Lindcove Citrus Clonal Protection Program at U.C. Riverside. On July 14, Dick is hosting a grafting clinic at his orchard, 1370 Nelligan Road, Glenn Ellen 95442. Experts from the chapter will demonstrate citrus grafting. Citrus budwood and rootstocks will be available for pickup to people who pre-ordered them, and leftover budwood will be available for purchase. Bring your own food, your own potted citrus if you want it grafted; bring BIG BAGGIES, LABELS, COOLER WITH BLUE ICE, to keep your scions fresh.

Please RSVP to Dick at [happyhealer2@gmail.com](mailto:happyhealer2@gmail.com) or his cell phone, 707-319-8930.



< techniques based on his experiences. He has equipped the house with an overhead drip line and a thermostatically controlled heater that keeps the temperature above freezing on cold nights. The hoop house is big enough to walk comfortably through, and Keith keeps a variety of citrus there in containers.

The day was sunny and warm, and we ate a potluck lunch outdoors. Afterward, fava beans and greens were available for picking from Keith's garden.

The basic plans Keith drew from for his house can be found at the Chapter website and links to:

<http://westsidegardener.com/howto/hoophouse.html>

Keith wrote up his upgrades into an information sheet, available here:

<http://www.crfg-redwood.org/greenhouse-cheap.pdf>